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ABSTRACT

Noting that there is a relationship between hunger and the ability to learn, this study examines teacher opinions of the impact of a school breakfast program on student success. A survey, focusing on grades 1 through 3, was completed by 188 elementary teachers in 100 Connecticut schools in which breakfast programs had been implemented. Respondents were asked about the influence of the breakfast program on children's attendance and hunger awareness, and about the impact of the program on teachers' ability to perform their job. Survey participants indicated that the School Breakfast Program had a significant influence on children's behaviors, enhancing attention and alertness, energy, motivation, concentration, and self-discipline. In addition, they believed that the program improved student attributes in ratings of cooperation, and responsibility. The results support the breakfast program as a valuable part of the school day because it improves the children's chances for learning. (AP)

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Teachers' Perceptions

of the

School Breakfast Program

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Teachers' Perceptions

of the

School Breakfast Program

November 1994

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Preface

There is a clear relationship between hunger and the ability to learn. Recent research has shown that even mild undernutrition in children is associated with lifelong cognitive impairment. This fact is a concern for all of us who seek the best possible opportunities for the optimum growth, health and education of Connecticut's children. The Connecticut State Department of Education supports the School Breakfast Program as an integral part of a comprehensive effort to address the needs of the total child in the school environment.

The School Breakfast Program operates in only about 30 percent of the state's 988 public schools. Many districts hesitate to participate, despite the studies which verify the role nutrition plays in learning, and despite the fact that we know some children in Connecticut come to school hungry. School officials cite many reasons for not implementing the breakfast program. Most common are issues of supervision, interference with bus schedules, and the length of time it takes to serve the meal.

In the 1993-94 school year, the State Department of Education decided to take a closer look at the schools' concerns by asking for information and comment from schools in which breakfast programs had been implemented. We sought opinions from teachers because we felt this group could give us the clearest picture of how the breakfast program affects the school day, the school staff and, most important, the child.

Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program reports the results of a survey conducted by staff members from the Department's Child Nutrition and Program Evaluation units. It incorporates the observations and opinions of elementary-level teachers in 100 Connecticut schools in which breakfast is offered. We believe the information provided here will be invaluable to educators, decision makers, families and communities as they continue their efforts on behalf of Connecticut children. It is our hope that nonparticipating districts will reconsider their decision, in light of the promise this program holds for the children it serves.

Acknowledgments

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Groton
Hartford
Killingly
Lebanon
Manchester
Middletown
Naugatuck
New Britain
New Haven
New London
Norwalk
Pomfret
Stafford
Stamford
Stonington
Vernon
Waterbury
Westbrook
West Hartford
Windham

Introduction

Historically, Connecticut schools have not been active participants in the School Breakfast Program, which is an entitlement program permanently authorized by federal legislation in 1975 for all public and nonprofit private schools. In Connecticut, there were only 35 operating breakfast programs in 1985. By that year, however, the state's economy was changing, and the incidence of Connecticut children living at or near poverty levels was increasing.

At the request of then-Governor William A.O'Neill, the State Department of Education conducted a feasibility study to determine if school district administrators perceived a need for the breakfast program and what the potential impediments to implementation might be. Responses to the feasibility study indicated that districts were somewhat interested in the program, but were concerned about costs related to the implementation of a new service.

Subsequent cost analyses were conducted with individual districts, and this resulted in the passage of state legislation which made supplemental state funds available to schools with the highest numbers of economically deprived students. Breakfast programs started to grow in both needy and more affluent areas of the state. At the close of school year 1993-94, 316 school breakfast programs were operating in Connecticut's public schools.

The Department remains committed to the principles of a quality education which maximizes the potential of every student. School breakfast should not be an effort that is measured only by the number of schools involved, but rather by the number of children whose potential for success may be enhanced by the opportunity to start the day with a well-nourished body.

This report, *Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program,* reflects a Department effort to measure the relationship between student success and the introduction of a breakfast program in some schools.

In January 1994, questionnaires were mailed to 300 teachers in Connecticut elementary schools which had an operating School Breakfast Program. Questions sought the teachers' opinions about the value of the breakfast program to the students in their care.

This survey marked the first time that the Child Nutrition Unit, which administers the School Breakfast Program, had formally solicited input from teachers regarding the issue of hunger in the schools and the perceived value of a meals program. Other questions on the survey concerned behavioral and attitudinal traits of children in relation to school breakfast and the impact of the operation of the program on teachers' ability to perform their jobs.

Response Characteristics

Methodology

In the initial stages of survey development, a focus group was held with teachers from elementary schools in Hartford to elicit their insight into the school breakfast experience. The draft survey was reviewed with a number of Department of Education colleagues and a member of the faculty of Eastern Connecticut State University who has particular expertise in this area.

The survey focused on teachers in Grades 1 through 3 in 100 public schools which had a School Breakfast Program in operation. Teachers' names were requested from each school, resulting in a statewide sampling population of 1,055 teachers.

It was critical to the study to capture the perceptions of teachers from many areas of the state and from districts of different sizes. To establish a sampling that was as broad-based and as balanced as possible, the districts were divided into three groups on the basis of the number of schools in the district, as follows:

District Groupings

Small rural districts	1 - 4 schools
Medium-sized rural/ urban districts	5 - 19 schools
Large urban districts	20 + schools

The names of 300 teachers chosen to receive the survey were randomly selected from the appropriate lists for each of the three groups, using a computerized table of random numbers.

Survey Responses

Of the 300 surveys sent out, 190 were returned. Two responses were disqualified because they were from fourth grade teachers and therefore did not fit the criteria for the study. The final number of responses for analysis was 188, which represents a 63 percent return.

Each survey included a coded return envelope, in order that each response could be identified with its appropriate district grouping. Seven surveys were returned in different envelopes from the ones provided. Other means were used to identify the groups to which these responses belonged, with only partial success. Three responses could not be identified with a particular group, and were coded accordingly.

Responses by Group

Group	Number of Responses	Percent
Small rural districts	65	35
Medium-sized rural/urban districts	58	31
Large urban districts	62	33
Unknown	3	2
Total	188	

Types of Meal Service

In some Connecticut schools in which the School Breakfast Program is offered, children eat their breakfast in the classroom, under the supervision of their classroom teacher. Most programs, however, serve breakfast in the cafeteria, where children may be supervised by teachers or, more often, by teacher aides. The survey included a question about the serving location in order to conduct an analysis to determine if there were differences between the answers provided by teachers who were actively involved in the breakfast service and those who were not. These two types of service are alluded to in other sections of this report.

Responses by Serving Site

Serving Site	Number of Responses	Percent
Cafeteria	150	80
Classroom	31	16
Other	7	4
Total	188	

Comments indicated that some teachers understood "other" to mean a gymnasium which doubles as a cafeteria. In one district, children are served in a hallway and carry their breakfasts to a multipurpose area.

One teacher indicated that the children eat in the cafeteria if time allows, but bring their breakfast to the classroom if the bus arrives late.

In both types of meal service, school breakfast food items are basically the same. Most frequently, school breakfast is a cold snack, consisting of grain items, fruit juice and milk. Protein items are also offered, though less frequently than the grains. Listed below are examples of school breakfasts served in Connecticut schools.

Menu Example # 1:

Choice of Enriched Cold Cereal
3-pack Graham Crackers
Apple Juice
Lowfat Milk

Menu Example #2:

3 oz. Blueberry Muffin
Orange Slices
Lowfat Milk

Menu Example #3:

Toasted Raisin Bagel (buttered)
Cheese Stick
Orange Juice
Lowfat Milk

Some schools occasionally offer warm foods in the cold weather, but this is difficult because of the limited serving time. When warm foods are offered, the choices usually include pancakes, waffles, egg biscuits or french toast sticks.

Survey Responses

General Perceptions

Two survey questions asked for responses that would provide insight into teachers' holistic perceptions of the School Breakfast Program. First, respondents were asked to rate their general perceptions of the influence of the School Breakfast Program on the students in their care. A significant majority indicated an overall positive perception:

Holistic Perception

General Perception	Number of Responses	Percent
Positive	135	72
No noticeable Influence	48	26
Negative	3	2
No response	2	1
Total	188	

A second question asked if teachers believed that the School Breakfast Program had a positive influence on the school day. Here, the percentage of teachers responding "positive" was even higher.

Question: *Do you feel that the School Breakfast program is a positive influence on the school day?*

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	163	87
No	25	13
Total	188	

These responses were analyzed in relation to the type of breakfast service which occurs in the school. Among the classroom-type service breakfast programs, 94 percent (29) of the teachers answered that the program was a positive influence on the school day. Eighty-five percent (128) of the teachers with cafeteria-type service also answered that the School Breakfast Program has a positive influence on the school day. Six teachers did not indicate the type of breakfast service which operates in their school, but they also responded positively.

The responses to both questions about overall perceptions indicate that teachers generally feel that the School Breakfast Program is a positive experience both for the children and for the school environment.

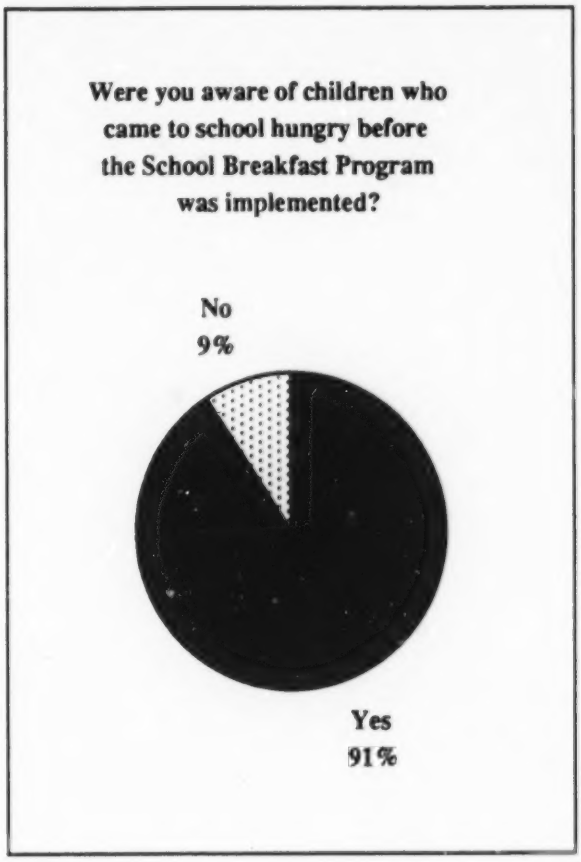
Awareness of Hunger

The Department was interested in the degree to which Connecticut teachers perceived an incidence of hunger among their students, and if they felt that breakfast programs made a difference for these children. To isolate this perception, three questions addressed the relationship between the environment before school breakfast and the environment after program implementation.

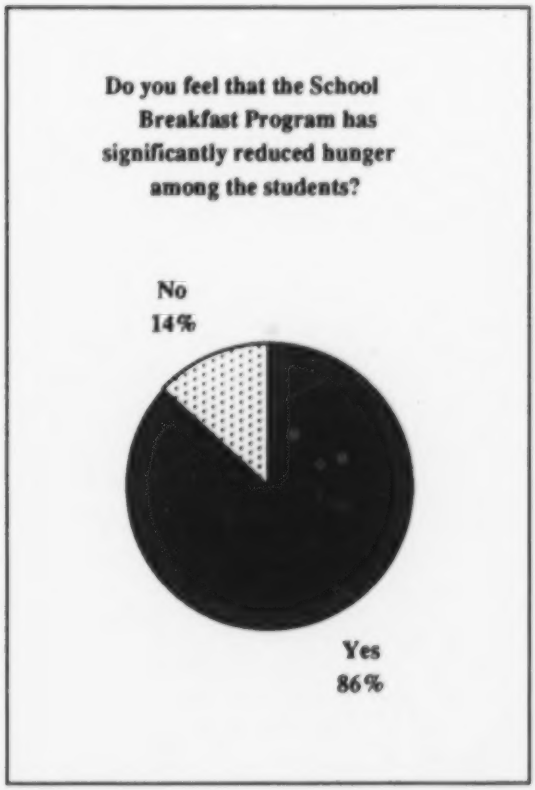
Question: *Were you teaching at this school before the School Breakfast Program was implemented?*

Response Category	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	153	81
No	34	18
No response	1	1
Total	188	

The 153 teachers who indicated that they were at their schools before the breakfast program was implemented were asked about their awareness of the incidence of hunger among their students.



Of the 153 teachers who had been teaching at their schools before the breakfast program started, 139 (91%) indicated that they were aware of children coming to school hungry.



Of the 139 teachers who said they were aware of children coming to school hungry, 120 (86%) said that the School Breakfast Program significantly reduced the condition of hunger among their students.

When given an opportunity to share their thoughts about any topic concerning the School Breakfast Program, 28 teachers offered comments relating the issue of hungry children and their own efforts to teach.

Common themes emerged around the ideas of children who can concentrate better, who feel more important, and who are more focused in their class work when they have had breakfast. Two teachers found that the breakfast program relieved them of the need to "sneak" food to children they knew had gone without. One teacher said that in her class there are no longer any children going to the nurse with illnesses related to hunger.

"Children who are hungry cannot learn effectively."

Attendance

Teachers were asked if it was their perception that the students' attendance had improved since the start of the School Breakfast Program. One hundred forty-four teachers (77%) responded that they perceived no change in attendance. Twenty-eight teachers (15%) perceived an improvement in levels of attendance. Sixteen teachers were not sure of a change, saw no change or did not respond to the question.

The question regarding attendance was a perception question only, and was not corroborated with any actual attendance count data.

Low Participation

The Department of Education collects data from the schools regarding the numbers of children who participate in the School Breakfast Program. An average participation rate in school breakfast programs in Connecticut equals about 30 percent of the number of students who participate in the lunch programs. In this survey, teachers were asked to respond if they believed that some children who are hungry don't use the breakfast program

Question: *Do you believe some children who are hungry don't participate in the Program when offered?*

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	114	61
No	69	37
Unsure	2	1
No response	3	2
Total	188	

Teachers were then asked to respond to a list of possible reasons for children's non-participation.

Some teachers indicated more than one reason that children may not participate in breakfast. The results are shown below:

Why Children Do Not Participate in the School Breakfast Program

Reason	Number of Responses
Arrive too late	97
Friends don't eat	43
Dislike food choices	36
Other	36

Arrive Too Late

The number of children who arrive too late to eat breakfast is a familiar problem for School Breakfast Programs in the state. Most of Connecticut's school children travel by bus, and breakfast is served in the few minutes between bus arrivals and the start of the school day. In most schools, if buses are late, the children go directly to class without eating. Some schools have arranged for these children to take their breakfast with them to class. Three teachers indicated that the children would still receive breakfast if they were hungry, no matter how late they arrived.

Late bus arrivals are a more common problem in schools where children eat in the cafeteria, since the children go to breakfast before they enter the classroom. Seventeen of the 31 teachers who feed children in the classroom indicated that late arrivals don't get breakfast. In schools where children eat in the cafeteria, 75 of the 150 teachers said that arriving too late causes their students to go without breakfast.

Friends don't eat

Forty-three teachers related the choice to eat breakfast with peer influences. These responses were corroborated by additional comments which showed that some children are choosing to stay in the play area rather than coming in to the school for breakfast.
For example:

"They don't want to be alone" and

"The children want this time with friends."

Dislike food choices

Thirty-six respondents indicated that the children may not be participating in the breakfast program because they do not like the food that is offered. No specific comments were given to clarify this point further. Insight into the children's and teachers' food preferences is provided in this report in the section entitled "Teachers' Opinions."

Other comments

Teachers offered other comments about why children may not participate in the breakfast program. Six referred to both parents and children who are embarrassed to participate. Some children were described as **"too shy"** to participate, while participation was referred to once as a **"stigma."** One teacher said that **"Some families do not want people to be aware of their need."**

Eight teachers had the perception that some children would eat breakfast at school if their parents had enough money for them to buy it there. The Department of Education staff assumes that these responses refer to children from families with incomes higher than the established guidelines for free meals. It is likely that there are families with total incomes that exceed the eligibility threshold for free meals, yet do not have sufficient means to pay for breakfast.

Five comments suggested that parents may not be aware that the School Breakfast Program exists or that it is available to **all** of the student body in the school.

Student Behaviors

Department staff members have been told by teachers in schools that provide breakfast that the children who have breakfast behave better in the classroom. This anecdotal information was not formally collected in the past, and the survey presented an opportunity to examine this perception in some depth.

Question: *Do you believe that children's behavior is enhanced by the existence of the School Breakfast Program?*

Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	141	75
No	46	25
Total	187*	

*One survey had no response.

The percentage of teachers who felt that student behaviors were enhanced by the School Breakfast Program was about the same in both cafeteria and classroom types of service.

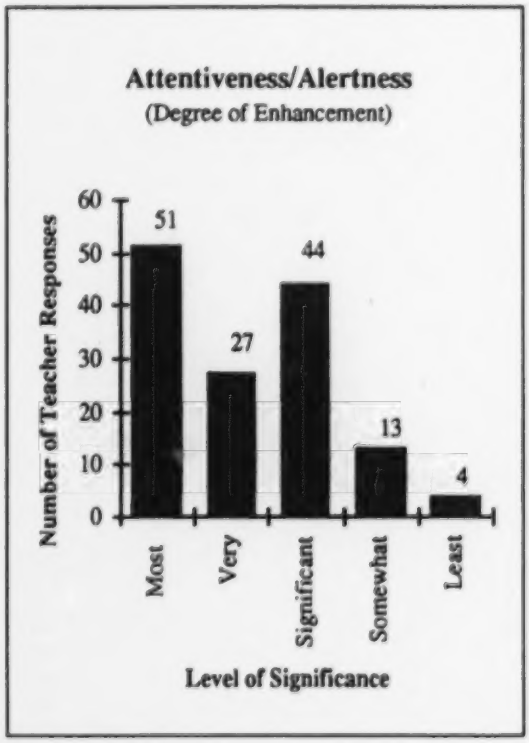
The survey provided a list of five examples of enhanced behaviors, plus an open category for additional comments, which teachers were asked to rate in terms of their significance. The behaviors had been identified from the focus group that was held with Hartford teachers before the survey instrument was developed.

The enhanced **student behaviors** were categorized as follows: **attentiveness/ alertness, motivation, self-discipline, concentration, energy level,** and **other.**

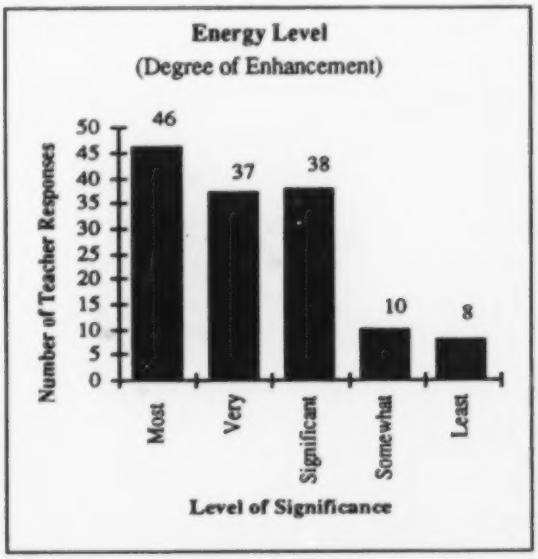
Using a scale from least to most significant, teachers were asked to rate how significantly these behaviors were enhanced by the School Breakfast Programs.

These are the results:

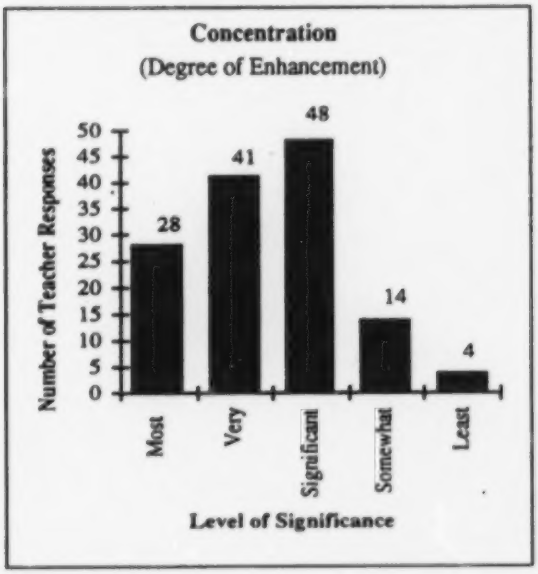
Seventy-four percent (139) of the teachers responded that the students' **attentiveness/ alertness** was enhanced by the School Breakfast Program. Eighty-eight percent of these teachers (122) rated the improvement of attentiveness/alertness as significant, very significant or most significant.



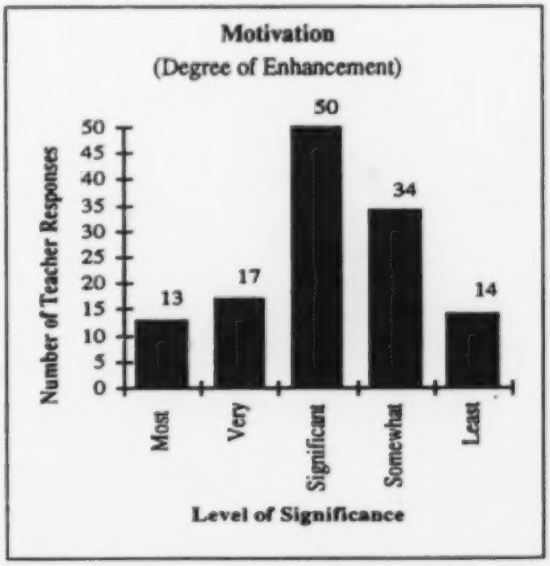
Seventy-four percent (139) of the teachers also responded that **energy level** among the students was enhanced by the School Breakfast Program. Eighty-seven percent of these teachers (121) rated the improvement of energy level as significant, very significant or most significant.



Seventy-two percent (135) of the teachers responded that improved **concentration** was enhanced by the School Breakfast Program. Eighty-seven percent of these teachers (117) rated improved concentration as significant, very significant or most significant.



Sixty-eight percent (128) of the teachers responded that **motivation** was enhanced by the School Breakfast Program. Sixty-three percent (80) of these teachers rated improved motivation as significant, very significant or most significant.



Sixty-seven percent (125) of the teachers responded that **self-discipline** was enhanced by the School Breakfast program. Forty percent (50) of these teachers rated the improvement in self-discipline as significant, very significant or most significant.

Seven teachers provided other comments about enhanced behaviors they have observed in their students. Rated as significant, very significant or most significant were the following:

self-esteem
willingness to come to school
positive attitude toward learning
more positive outlook
happiness
satisfaction

One teacher volunteered that school breakfast is ***"one less thing these needy children need to worry about. Food is very important to these children. For many the school food is all they get all day long."***

The most compelling comment came from the teacher who said, ***"It's difficult to rank these. They've all been influenced positively by the program. I used to have hungry children crying, begging for snacktime as soon as they came in, being aggressive. It was bad."***

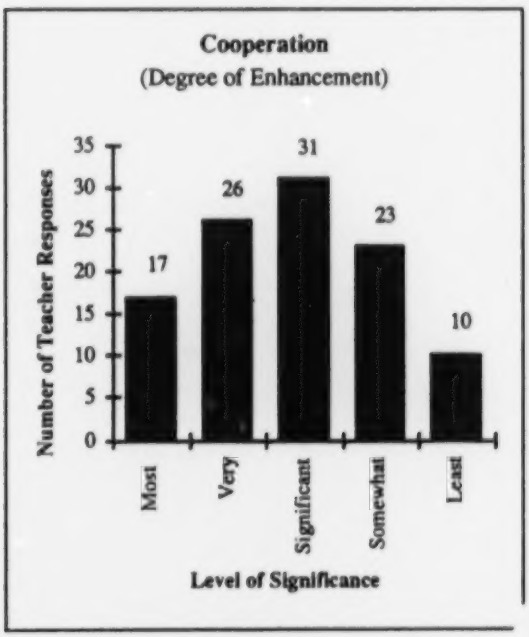
Student Attributes

One survey item offered teachers the opportunity to rate the degree to which certain student attributes have been enhanced by the School Breakfast Program. Eight possible responses were presented, including space for open comment and space to indicate if there was no noticeable change in the degree of key attributes. The rating scale was from least significant to most significant.

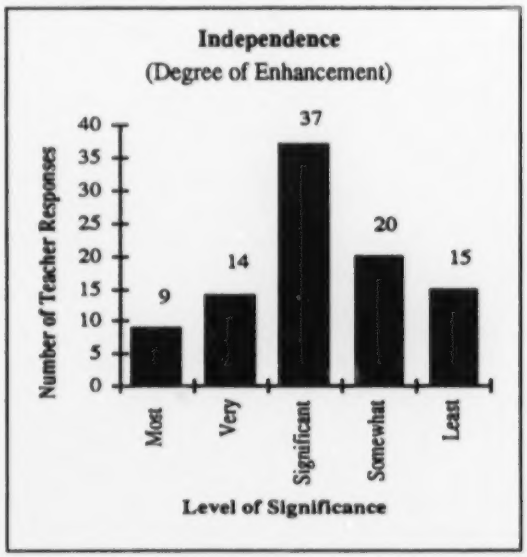
The options for rating included **cooperation, leadership, socialization, independence, responsibility, curiosity, other,** and **no noticeable change.**

These are the results:

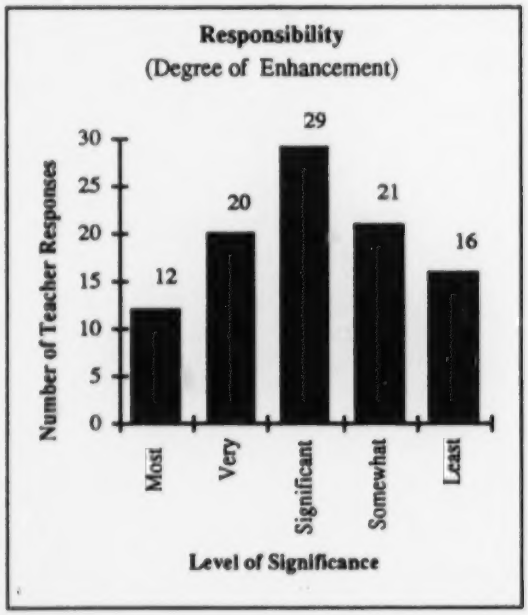
Fifty-seven percent (107) of the teachers responded that student **cooperation** was enhanced by the breakfast program. Of these, 74 (69%) rated enhanced cooperation as significant, very significant or most significant.



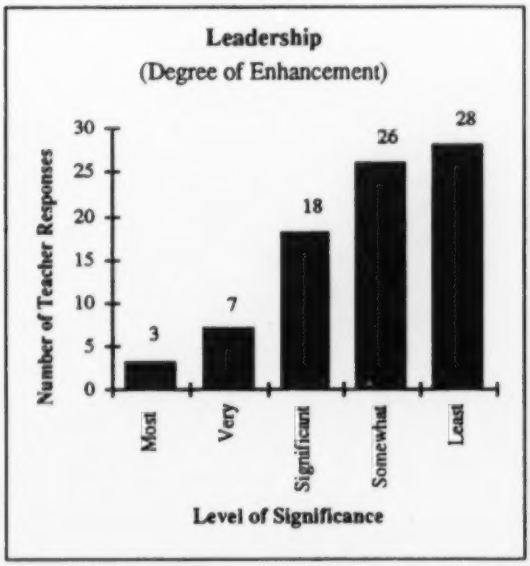
Fifty-one percent (95) of the teachers responded that **independence** was enhanced by the breakfast program. Of these, 60 (63%) rated enhanced independence as significant, very significant or most significant.



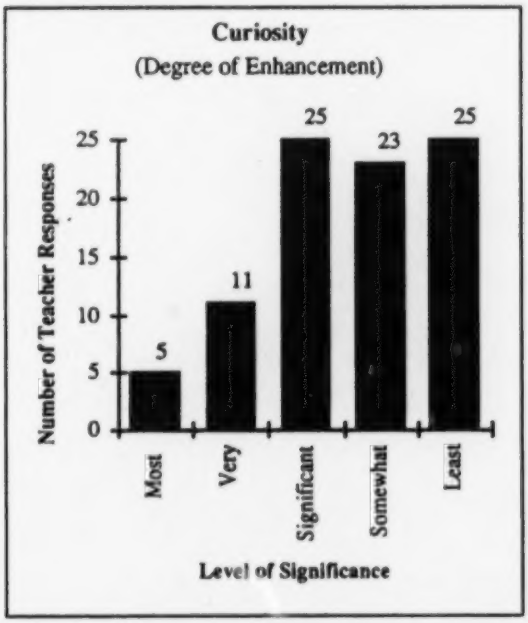
Fifty-two percent (97) of the teachers responded that **responsibility** was enhanced by the School Breakfast program. Of these, sixty-three percent (61) rated enhanced responsibility as significant, very significant or most significant.



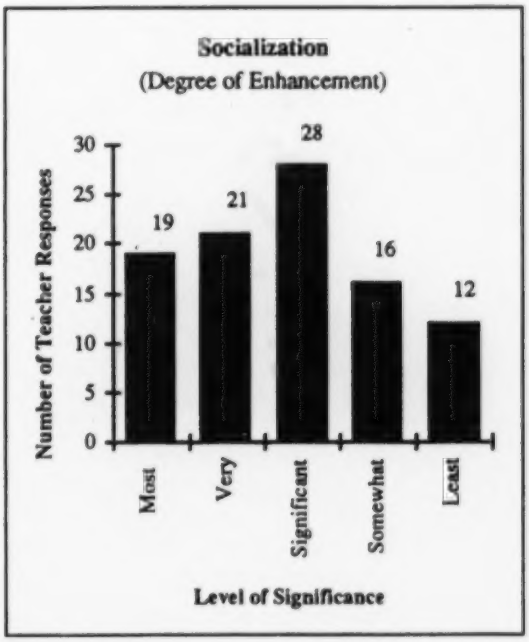
Forty-four percent (82) of the teachers responded that **leadership** was enhanced by the breakfast program. Of these, 28 (34%) rated enhanced leadership as significant, very significant or most significant.



Fifty-one percent (95) of the teachers responded that **curiosity** was enhanced by the breakfast program. Of these, 41 (43%) rated enhanced curiosity as significant, very significant or most significant.



Fifty-one percent (96) of the teachers responded that **socialization** was enhanced by the breakfast program. Of these, 68 (71%) rated socialization as significant, very significant, or most significant.



Fifty-two teachers indicated that they observed **no noticeable change** in their students which could be attributable to the School Breakfast Program.

Other Comments

Given the opportunity to provide **other comments** about positive attributes and the School Breakfast Program, the teachers offered the following:

"recycling — have used containers for many things in room"

" 'please' and 'thank you,' politeness / share food, allow [other] person to go first' "

"students stay alert"

"personal productivity and responsiveness to learning"

"Children are not hungry."

"[Children] don't complain of stomach-aches from hunger."

Effect on Teachers

The effect of the School Breakfast program on teachers and their work is an important consideration. One question directly addressed this issue. Comments and detailed analysis in light of other data (such as location of breakfast service) provided further insight.

Question: *Has the School Breakfast Program made your job more difficult in anyway?*

Responses	Number of Responses	Percent
No	125	66
Yes	59	31
No response	4	2
Total	188	

The responses clearly indicated that the teachers in schools with cafeteria-type breakfast service perceive more problems with the program than those where schools have classroom-type service. Of the 59 teachers who responded that the program has made their jobs more difficult, 46 (78%) worked in schools with cafeteria-type service. Of these 46 responses, 30 teachers indicated that the children's lateness to class was due primarily to late bus arrivals and resulting delays in having breakfast. Three teachers commented that they make appropriate adjustments in their schedule because it is worth it to know that the children are eating. Two others said they feel the children are missing important early morning routines and directions when these delays occur.

Nine teachers with classroom service provided comments about their problems with the School Breakfast Program. These comments were primarily about time spent with clean-up procedures.

Teachers also were asked to indicate what they believe are the most important problems related to the School Breakfast Program that need to be addressed. As shown below, four key areas emerged. Three of these received the most significant (and roughly equal) emphasis.

Problems to be Addressed

Problem	Number of Responses	Percent
Takes too much time	39	31
Variety of food	37	29
Children are disruptive	36	28
Quality of food	12	9
Other comments	4	3
Total	128	

Many of the comments provided in the "other" category were repetitions of what the teachers had indicated in other parts of the survey.

Twenty-one teachers expressed their feelings that school breakfast is a good program and that they see no particular problems with it. One of these commented this way:

"Our breakfast program is a smashing success."

Fifteen teachers wanted improvement in the nutritional quality of the food, with an emphasis on reducing excess sugar.

Nine teachers wished to see greater student participation in breakfast, while nine others saw problems with the time it takes from the morning routine.

Four respondents commented about the amount of food they believe is wasted by students who take and then don't eat all of their breakfast.

Teachers' Comments

As a final survey question, teachers were given an opportunity to share written comments on any aspect of the School Breakfast Program. Their comments are a valuable source of information and have been categorized into three common themes, as follows:

Teachers' Comments

Theme	Number of Comments	Percent
Program nonsupport	23	15
Program improvement	51	33
Program support	79	52
Total	153	

Responses were about equally divided among the three district groupings explained in the "Methodology" section (see page 3).

Nonsupport

There were 23 comments of nonsupport for the School Breakfast Program. Eighteen (78%) of these respondents expressed opinions about the school's responsibility versus the responsibilities of parents. These are some of their comments:

"I do not believe schools should be in the restaurant business."

"Schools are taking over in too many ways."

"I don't think the school should be responsible."

"I believe feeding children breakfast is not a school responsibility."

"Let's have parents take responsibility."

"Some parents take the easy way out because they know the children can eat at school."

The School Breakfast Program was criticized by one teacher as a time when children simply socialize and don't really eat. Another response commented that parents use the program as a baby-sitter. Two teachers indicated that the School Breakfast Program was not worthwhile because only a few of their students use the program.

Improvements

Fifty-one comments offered ideas for improving the School Breakfast Program. Of these, 55 percent (28) addressed the **nutritional quality of the food.** Some teachers are particularly troubled by the offering of high-sugar bread products, such as some cereals and selected muffins, doughnuts and cinnamon rolls.

Other respondents addressed the need for warm foods in the cold months, and many suggested an increase in fruits and juice. There also was a repeated call for more variety among food choices.

Significant in this group of comments was the frequency of conflicting messages. Some teachers wanted no chocolate milk, while others wanted to see more of it. Some wanted cereal removed from the menu; others wanted the children to have cereal every day. Some felt the food was of poor nutritional quality, while others found the selection and quality to be very good. Overall, the teachers asked for a review of the nutritional aspects of the School Breakfast Program.

Program improvement was addressed in areas other than food quality. Issues surfaced regarding **ticket procedures, program promotion, length of serving time** and **program monitoring**.

Two comments complimented the caring attitude of the food service staff, while one criticized the noncaring attitude of the cafeteria staff.

References to **food waste** were included in nine responses. Two teachers felt that allowing children to throw away food sends a conflicting message about the importance of caring for the needy and concerns for the environment. Other teachers observed what they described as the needless waste of food taken but not finished. However, two respondents said that their breakfast programs experienced no wasted food at all.

Program Support

Of the seventy-nine teachers whose comments expressed support for the School Breakfast Program, 54 (68%) described the program as being "good" and "necessary" for their students. They asked that the program be allowed to continue, and stated that they have witnessed its benefits. These are some of their comments:

"I think the breakfast program is necessary and beneficial."

"The breakfast program is a wonderful experience for young children."

"I feel STRONGLY this is a worthwhile program."

"I recommend this service to other schools."

"I believe it is an excellent program."

"I think the breakfast program is a success."

"I am a big supporter of the breakfast program."

"This is a wonderful experience which should be maintained and enhanced."

"I hope it never leaves our school. The children will suffer greatly."

Twenty-six teachers noted that children who are fed are more apt to learn. They commented on a positive relationship between school breakfast and increased energy levels. According to these teachers, the children demonstrated improved ability to focus, listen, concentrate and function. Fewer children complained about being hungry, and less attention was paid to when lunch time would come.

This is a sampling of comments received:

"If there's a problem with a child, I look elsewhere if I know the child is partaking of the breakfast program."

"Rather than focusing on hunger, they are more prepared to have a successful learning experience."

"Children get unhappy when they do not have breakfast due to late openings."

"I don't notice as many complaints of hunger before lunch time."

If the program was not available in our school I know I'd have many students come to my classroom unable to attend and concentrate because they were hungry."

"Children can't think and learn until basic needs like hunger are attended to. My mornings go much more smoothly now that hungry children are fed before coming to class."

"They are able to concentrate on school more and worry about their stomachs less."

The supporters of the School Breakfast Program included a group of 14 who characterized the program as a nurturing or social activity.

"We eat quietly, family style."

"The children look forward to the responsibility of taking and bringing breakfast [taking breakfast from the service area and bringing it to the classroom]. They also enjoy and look forward to eating their breakfast in the morning."

"I think the breakfast program enhances a feeling of community in the school. The children are sitting in the gym or cafeteria socializing first thing in the morning and they're laughing and smiling already."

"The breakfast program has provided an opportunity for my special education students to develop self-help skills, language skills, and knowledge of appropriate behavior in social situations."

"The children seem to feel more important when they feel a breakfast is offered."

"Without breakfast, all some of them can think of is when lunch time is."

"It makes my job easier, knowing a child is fed in the morning."

"Since the program began I have not had to provide cereal or [a] snack for a hungry child. I have also not had to send any children to the nurse due to feeling ill because he/she did not eat breakfast."

Seven of the supportive comments alluded to the problem of low student participation and these respondents' perceptions that the program is not reaching all of the students they think it should. Examples of comments follow:

"I would like to see more of the children participate in it."

"I wish all who are eligible would take advantage of it."

Specifically, teachers would like to see their districts more actively promote the program to parents.

Teacher comments described a wide variety of good experiences and positive results for their students. Three respondents said that the program provides an opportunity for parental participation and that parents feel more confident that the children are eating breakfast.

"The program is a good back-up for several families."

Conclusion

The Department of Education wishes to thank all of the teachers whose time and insight made this survey report possible. An abundance of helpful information has been provided to the Child Nutrition Unit which will guide us as we look to the future and enhance our efforts to better serve the needs of Connecticut's schoolchildren.

Teacher responses provided overwhelming support for the School Breakfast Program. In addition, the responses evidenced awareness that there are many children who come to school hungry. This problem, left unaddressed, impedes children's opportunities to learn.

The School Breakfast Program is characterized by most survey respondents as a positive influence on children's behaviors. For example, teachers find that with the School Breakfast Program, the children are more attentive and more alert, have more energy and concentrate better. Students also are more cooperative and show a greater sense of responsibility. **The program is a valuable part of the school day because it enhances the children's chances for learning.**

The Child Nutrition Unit will use the insight provided in the responses to conduct a more thorough review of the School Breakfast Program. We also look forward to assisting with the development of marketing strategies for School Breakfast, and to providing nutritional information that will help the schools plan their menu offerings with less sugary foods. The staff of the Nutrition Education and Training Program plans to develop training options that will integrate the school meals experience with the needs of the teaching staff.

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